REMARKS

Claims 3, 4, 6 and 8 now stand in the application, claims 1, 2, 5 and 7 canceled and new claim 8 added. Reconsideration of the application and allowance of all claims are respectfully requested in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

The claims have been amended to address the issues raised by the examiner in paragraphs 1-6 of the Office action.

The prior art rejection is respectfully traversed.

New claim 8 has been drafted to include:

the sorting/rejecting process in case of fingerprint matching (paragraphs [0054] and [0061] of the specification),

the chronological order as being the order in which the items are loaded into the sorting outlet bins (claim 5 as originally filed, and paragraph [0035]),

the recording of data relative to matching obtained between fingerprints from a second sorting pass and fingerprints recorded in the memory in the first sorting (paragraph [0060]),

the computing of an estimated chronological serial number by means of a linear approximation (see claim 2 as originally filed),

the searching for a fingerprint matching on the basis of the estimated chronological serial number to limit exploration space for matching fingerprints (paragraph [0011]),

scanning, in full, fingerprints recorded in the first sorting pass in case of no matching (paragraphs [0051], [0061] and [0065]), and if no matching is obtained rejecting the current item (paragraph [0052]).

Claim 6 has now been amended to recite that chronological index corresponds to chronological order in which the items are loaded into the sorting outlet bins as explained in paragraph [0035].

Advantageously, the combination of identifying a series of fingerprint matching by means of chronological serial numbers and computing an estimated chronological serial number by means of a linear approximation allows the performance of a fingerprint match search over a limited exploration space even if the items are injected into the machine in the second sorting pass out of sequence (see, e.g., paragraph [0068]).

WO2005/089966 (Caillon, corresponding to USP 7,356,162) discloses a method for processing postal item in a two sorting pass process, in which identification numbers (Bac-Id) are assigned to sorting outlet storage bins (see page 4, lines 10-11). During a first sorting pass, digital fingerprints extracted from item images are recorded in association with storage bin identifications (Sac-Id) in which they are stored (page 6, lines 30-35). However, fingerprints are not associated with chronological serial numbers corresponding to the order in which the items are loaded into the sorting outlet bins as required by new claim 8.

Then, the method of Caillon includes a step of counting matching between fingerprints from first and second sorting passes in order to update a database (page 7, line 33 to page 8, line 34) which is very different from recording of data relative to matching obtained between fingerprints from first and second sorting passes and retrieving by linear approximation a series of corresponding chronological serial numbers of matching fingerprints to estimate a chronological order of fingerprints, as is recited in claim 8.

Additionally, Caillon does not teach the step of computing an estimated chronological serial number for a current item by means of a linear approximation in order to limit exploration space for matching fingerprints as required by new claim 8.

WO01123108 (Bayer, corresponding to USP 6,888,084) also teaches a method for processing postal items in a two sorting pass process. During the first sorting pass, fingerprints are recorded in association with the time at which the postal address is read (page 5, line 16 and 7, lines 8-13) which is different than the chronological order in which the items are loaded into the sorting outlet bins.

During the second sorting pass, the order of postal items is either known (cases 1 or 2, page 8) or the order of the containers containing items has to be determined (case 3, page 8) in order to limit exploration space for matching fingerprints. According to case 3, a "start card" indicates that a new container starts. Bayer then teaches to compare the current fingerprint with the n=5 first fingerprints of each database section corresponding to a container to identify a current container (page 8, line 28 to page 9, line 10). In case of fingerprint matching, the fingerprint of the next item in the second sorting pass will be compared with the next five fingerprints recorded in memory in the first sorting pass following the previous matched fingerprint (page 9, lines 12-19). However, Bayer does not identify a several fingerprints matching by means of chronological serial numbers and it does not compute an estimated chronological serial number by means of a linear approximation. In Bayer, container identification does not allow estimating the chronological order of a fingerprint.

Consequently, the applied prior art neither describes nor suggests the identification of a several matching fingerprints and computing an estimated chronological serial number by means of a linear approximation in order to limit exploration space.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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